

To the Independent Voters of West-Out.

GENTLEMEN,

OUR political disputants universally agree in these three points:—That the constitutional government of this country, by a well-proportioned distribution of power to the king, the nobility, and the common-people, is a peculiar blessing, which every true Briton ought anxiously to preserve—That, at this crisis, the spirit of this wise constitution is in great danger of being lost—And that this danger, and many other public calamities, are the effects of faction. But, tho' all this be universally allowed, there are but few who endeavour to shew whence our factions have arisen, how they are supported, or by what means they may be suppressed. We have many active and sensible gentlemen in this city, who profess a laudable zeal for the restoration of public tranquillity; but, if I understand the means by which they think their wishes may be realized, I fear they will be found very inadequate, if not directly contrary, to the purpose. They seem to imagine, that national happiness will be secured by the hearty union of the several leaders of our contending parties. But this is an event so much out of the common road of nature, that no one, who regards the rule of probabilities, can expect it sincerely to take place: And, supposing such a miracle should happen, I augur (from the little regard our statesmen in general pay to the spirit of the constitution) that such a coalition of parties would be nothing more nor less than a COALITION OF TYRANTS. To see the probability of this, let us examine whence our factions arise, and how they are supported.—There is in man a natural love of power. In the true patriot this is but a secondary desire, subservient to that of being a public benefactor, and partakes of the nature of virtue. But it too often happens, that power is desired merely to lord it over others; and thus the love of power becomes a vicious ambition—a passion which brooks no superiority, makes a man hate even an equal, and becomes dangerous to the public in proportion as it is attended with wealth and intellectual ability. Ambition is the peculiar vice of statesmen (some of whom have not been quite untainted with avarice); and if in any nation there be many great men under influence of the passion, there faction rears her Hydra heads; and accordingly as the people are seduced or compelled to take party, that nation becomes a scene of civil discord. Some leaders may combine to dethrone others whose power eclipses their own; but this end once answered, the same ambition which produced the coalition against their superior will prompt them to another struggle with each other; and thus public tranquillity will be banished, till some means be devised to keep the powers of such men within due bounds.—Whether there are, or are not, men of this description amongst us, let the public determine. Whilst we see our statesmen take all the colours of theameleon and all the shapes of Proteus; this hour contending with all the virulence of deadly hatred, and the next coalescing with the warmest professions of friendship; out of power, lamenting the poverty of the state, and calling aloud for reformation and oeconomy; but, when in, grasping at all the emoluments of office; when we see these and other contradictions innumerable, can we remain in doubt, whether they are, or are not, driven to these extremes by the force of a low ambition, or sordid avarice, which cares not by what means it arrives at gratification?—To find out how our party-leaders are supported in their pernicious oppositions, we need only advert to the corrupted state of parliamentary representation. Do we in the House of Commons find men elected by the free and unbought voice of the major part of the people, as the spirit of the constitution supposes? No. Our boroughs are become the private property of the nobility, and their members (to speak the truth) are representatives of their several patrons, and not of the people of Britain. Hence our factious nobles derive their power of disturbing the public tranquillity, and are enabled to laugh at the people, and to besiege the throne.—This being the fact, supposing a broad-bottomed coalition of such leaders takes place, what can we expect, but that their will must be the universal law; and that, the spirit of the constitution being extinguished, our understandings will be insulted with the bare name of our being governed by king, lords, and commons.—Happily, however, the nature of ambition will not permit such a coalition to subsist; we are therefore to remain suffering witnesses of the struggles of faction, till our increasing miseries rouse us to enquire earnestly into their cause, and give us spirit to seek their only remedy, BY A RENOVATION OF THE CONSTITUTION, IN AN EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your Brother Free Man,

Exeter, Jan.
31. 1784.

Thorough-Work.